

## Message Text

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S/S - MR. KUCHEL

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 104308 TOSEC 110423

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM EAGLEBURGER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.), OGEN

SUBJECT: PROGNOSIS FOR THE TEXAS PRIMARY

1.A.THE REPUBLICAN CONTEST. AFTER TRAILING REAGAN BADLY IN EARLY POLLS ON THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY IN TEXAS, THE PRESIDENT NOW APPEARS TO HAVE AN OUTSIDE CHANCE FOR A NARROW VICTORY. SOLID PREDICTIONS ARE VERY HAZARDOUS TO MAKE BECAUSE THIS IS THE FIRST GOP PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY IN TEXAS HISTORY. WHILE THE TURNOUT IN PAST CONTESTS FOR LOWER OFFICE HAS USUALLY BEEN AROUND 100,000, THIS IS A CROSSOVER STATE, AND BOTH CAMPS EXPECT A VOTE IN THE RANGE OF 250 - 300,000.

2. THE WILD CARD IN THIS SATURDAY'S PRIMARY WILL BE THE EXTENT TO WHICH WALLACE DEMOCRATS CROSSOVER TO SUPPORT REAGAN. HIS CAMPAIGN IS ACTIVELY WOOING THIS GROUP OF VOTERS, BUT IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO MEASURE THIS FACTOR IN ADVANCE OF THE ACTUAL VOTE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, THE FORD CAMPAIGN IS ACTIVELY SOLICITING THE SUPPORT OF THE SO-CALLED "NATIONAL REPUBLICANS" -- THOSE REGISTERED

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DEMOCRATS WHO USUALLY VOTE FOR THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL

NOMINEE IN THE FALL GENERAL ELECTIONS -- SO DEMOCRATIC VOTERS HOLD THE KEY TO THE OUTCOME OF THIS REPUBLICAN PRIMARY.

3. GIVEN THIS UNCERTAINTY, THE RECENT ENCOURAGING SIGNS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S CHANCES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

I) THE LATEST PUBLIC POLL (CONDUCTED BY A HOUSTON TV STATION) SHOWED THAT REPUBLICAN VOTERS PREFERRED REAGAN TO THE PRESIDENT BY A 47 TO 45 PERCENT MARGIN -- A VIRTUAL DEADLOCK AS COMPARED TO REAGAN'S COMMANDING LEAD SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. THERE IS A GROWING OPINION AMONG TEXAS-BASED POLITICAL EXPERTS (SUCH AS THE EDITOR OF SAN ANTONIO'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER) THAT REAGAN'S EFFORT PEAKED SEVERAL DAYS AGO, AND THAT THE PRESIDENT IS CLOSING FAST AND OUGHT TO PEAK ON SATURDAY. HOWEVER, IT SHOULD BE ADDED THAT THE WHITE HOUSE BELIEVES THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL BE VERY LUCKY TO ACHIEVE A STAND-OFF WITH REAGAN. THE PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE BELIEVES THAT FORD STILL MIGHT LOSE BADLY.

II) THE PRESIDENT IS CAMPAIGNING HARD THROUGHOUT THE STATE IN THESE FINAL DAYS, AND IS OUTSPENDING HIS OPPONENT ON MEDIA ADVERTISING BY A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT. REAGAN, ACTING UPON WHAT MAY BE UNFOUNDED CONFIDENCE, HAS CUT HIS TEXAS CAMPAIGN APPEARANCE SCHEDULE IN HALF IN THE FINAL WEEK. THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS ON FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE HAVE BEEN MORE FORCEFUL THAN EVER -- HE IS CAMPAIGNING AS WELL AS HE CAN -- AND THIS CAN ONLY HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON SATURDAY'S OUTCOME.

III) MORE IMPORTANTLY, A KEY UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION IN THE POWERFUL OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY HAS SWITCHED ITS SUPPORT FROM REAGAN TO FORD. A LETTER WAS SENT TO 3500 OIL MEN FROM THIS INFLUENTIAL GROUP ARGUING THAT FORD IS THE BEST BET FOR RETAINING THE WHITE HOUSE THIS FALL, THAT HE IS REASONABLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE INDUSTRY'S INTERESTS, AND THAT IT IS TIME TO CLOSE RANKS BEHIND HIM. PRESS SPECULATION SEES JOHN CONNALLY'S HAND BEHIND THIS SWITCH, WHICH, IN TEXAS, CAN ONLY ADD TO ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

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4. FINALLY, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS PRIMARY HAS NO BEAUTY CONTEST, ONLY INDIVIDUAL DELEGATE RACES IN THE STATE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS (SIMILAR TO THE NEW YORK PRIMARY). THIS COULD LEAD TO A SITUATION WHERE REAGAN COULD WIN AS MANY DELEGATES IN WESTERN DISTRICTS WITH TURN-OUTS IN THE THOUSANDS AS FORD WINS IN THE URBAN DISTRICTS WITH TURNOUTS IN THE TENS OF THOUSANDS. NEVERTHELESS, REAGAN NEEDS TO WIN A CONVINCING MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES

IN ORDER TO PRODUCE A RIPPLE EFFECT AND KEEP HIS CANDIDACY VIABLE.

5. THE REPORTING FACILITIES ARE PRIMITIVE AND THE RESULTS WILL BE VERY SLOW IN COMING IN. WE WILL KEEP YOU POSTED ON

ALL RESULTS AS SOON AS THEY ARE ANNOUNCED, BUT DON'T EXPECT MUCH INFORMATION BEFORE SUNDAY P.M. OUR TIME.

6. B. IN THE WAKE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA PRIMARY RESULTS, JIMMY CARTER IS IN EXCELLENT POSITION TO EMBARRASS SENATOR BENTSEN'S SLATE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY. CARTER IS EXPECTED TO TAKE A CONVINCING PLURALITY OF THE DELEGATES AGAINST WEAKENING OPPOSITION FROM BENTSEN AND WALLACE. WALLACE HAS MADE A LESS CONCERTED EFFORT FOR HIS NATURAL CONSTITUENCY THAN REAGAN HAS. SISCO

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